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Annual Lecture to Focus on American Attitudes Toward Death Penalty

Sep-16-2003



Phoebe Ellsworth, a professor of psychology and law at the University of Michigan, will deliver Eastern Illinois University's 15th annual Fall Phi Beta Kappa Lecture at 7:30 p.m. Thursday, Sept. 18, in Buzzard Auditorium (room 1501).

Her topic will be "American Attitudes Toward the Death Penalty, 1950-2003." Admission is free and open to the public.

She explained her lecture topic as follows: "In the last quarter of the 20th century, Americans favored the death penalty far more strongly than citizens of most industrialized countries. America was one of the few such countries to retain the death penalty, and Americans executed more people than almost any other country.

"At the end of the century, however, these attitudes began to soften. My talk will discuss this history and the underlying psychology of the strong support and of the factors that can lead even an apparently unshakable attitude to change."

Ellsworth, who is a Robert B. Zajonc Collegiate Professor in the University of Michigan's Department of Psychology, as well as Kirkland and Ells Professor in the university's Law School, previously was a faculty member at Yale (1971-1981) and at Stanford (1981-1987). She has been a fellow of the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences, a fellow of the Institute for the Humanities (University of Michigan) and a senior fellow of the Michigan Society of Fellows.

In 2001, Mount St. Mary's College established the annual Phoebe C. Ellsworth Symposium on Psychology and Justice.

She is a fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and of the American Association of Applied and Preventive Psychology, and has been a Distinguished Lecturer for the American Psychological Association. Her professional memberships include the American Psychological Association, the American Psychological Society, the Society for Experimental Social Psychology (former member, executive board), Law and Society Association (former member, board of trustees) and the International Society of Research on Emotion.

Ellsworth is the former associate editor of Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, and currently serves on the editorial boards of Motivation and Emotion, Law and Human Behavior, Law and Society Review and Emotion.